

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01864 041319Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7483
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1864

STADIS//////////

FOR NEA/ARN DRAPER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIA JEWRY

1. CHARGE AND VISITING BEIRUT DCM LANE CALLED ON JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADER SELIM TOUTAH APRIL 3. IN ANSWER OUR QUESTION, TOUTAH SAID COMMUNITY'S SECURITY AND LIVING SITUATION WAS NORMAL AND THERE HAD BEEN NO INCIDENTS OR REPERCUSSIONS AS A RESULT OF THE ISRAELI INTERVENTION IN LEBANON.

2. ON LEBANESE JEWISH COMMUNITY, TOUTAH NOTED ITS SIZE WAS NOW VERY SMALL 250 OR SO, LOCATED MOSTLY IN BEIRUT AND BHAMDOUN. A QUALIFIED MEMBER OF THE DAMASCUS COMMUNITY VISITS BHAMDOUN WEEKLY TO SLAUGHTER MEAT, PERFORM CIRCUMCISIONS AND CARRY MESSAGES BACK AND FORTH. SYRIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE ACCORDED HIM A SIX MONTH, MULTIPLE EXIT VISA. IN ADDITION, A MEMBER OF THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY WAS CURRENTLY IN DAMASCUS, TRAVELING ON HIS IRANIAN PASSPORT, SEEKING PERMISSION WITH TOUTAH'S HELP TO MARRY A SYRIAN JEWISH WOMAN AND RETURN WITH HER TO BEIRUT.

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3. ON OTHER MATTERS, TOUTAH REPORTED NO CHANGE. FOREIGN TRAVEL REMAINS VERY RESTRICTED. MATTER OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO HAVE TRAVELED TO ISRAEL STILL PENDING BEFORE STATE SECURITY COURT BUT NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN. TOUTAH BELIEVES CHANCES ARE GOOD IT WILL GRADUALLY FADE AWAY WITHOUT ANY FINAL DISPOSITION. THERE WERE ALSO RUMORS THAT THE

SYRIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
JEWISH COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, LT.COL. ABD AL-SAMAD AND COLONEL
MESSAOUD, MIGHT SOON BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER DUTIES.

4. ON WHETHER TO MOVE FORWARD WITH NEXT BATCH OF UNMARRIED
GIRLS, TOUTAH REPEATED HIS PREVIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT NOW NOT
BEING THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO RAISE MATTER WITH SARG. WITH
ASSAD UNDER CRITICISM FROM PALESTINIANS, IRAQIS AND EGYPTIANS
THAT SYRIA IS NOT DOING ENOUGH TO COUNTER THE "ISRAELI
AGGRESSION" IN SOUTH LEBANON, THE IMMEDIATE EXTERNAL CIRCUM-
STANCES DO NOT FAVOR ASSAD MAKING WHAT WOULD BE VIEWED AS A
GESTURE TO THE U.S. AND ISRAEL BY APPROVING DEPARTURE OF GIRLS.
TOUTAH OPINED IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO WAIT AT LEAST UNTIL ISRAELI
FORCES HAD WITHDRAWN FROM LEBANON.
PELLETREAU

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